

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

- 1-22. (Canceled)
23. (Currently Amended) A method for the *in vitro* diagnosis of breast cancer, comprising determining the presence of Nerve Growth Factor (NGF) in a biological sample obtained from a patient suspected of suffering from breast cancer, wherein the biological sample ~~comprises a biological fluid~~ is selected from the group consisting of: blood, bone marrow, milk, cerebrospinal fluid, urine, and effusions.
24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said biological fluid is pretreated in order to isolate circulating tumor cells present in said fluid.
25. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the presence of NGF is demonstrated by direct detection of NGF in said biological sample.
26. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the detection of NGF is carried out by ~~means of~~ an immunoassay or by mass spectrometry.
27. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising culturing the circulating tumor cells under conditions such that they secrete NGF.
28. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the circulating tumor cells are cultured under conditions that block the NGF inside said cells.
29. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the detection of NGF further comprises culturing NGF-sensitive cells in the presence of said biological sample.
30. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim ~~28~~ 29, further comprising culturing circulating tumor cells under conditions such that they secrete NGF.

31. (Previously Presented) A method for the early diagnosis, screening, therapeutic follow-up, prognosis and the diagnosis of relapse in the case of breast cancer, comprising the method of claim 23.